Summary

It was fairly simple when you died. Make a deal and you get a second chance to live. You took it, getting another life and a loitering roommate as well. But then his boss comes along and ruins everything.

Notes

Oh no, I found something else to obsess over and write unnecessary reader inserts about. I wish I could explain what my creative process was, but it just sort of spilled onto a word document. Spur of the moment. This is going to be sinful, and I'm not just saying that because demons are involved.
The Part With Cake

The sound of cold water pouring into the sink almost makes you fall asleep again before you splash yourself in the face with it. You shake your head, fighting back wanting to pass out and never wake up again and look up to check yourself in the mirror. Well, it's good to know the same human being is still staring back at you. Though the bags under your eyes are new. You should really get some melatonin or something, because these past few days have destroyed your sleep schedule.

You know exactly who to blame for nights of stress and desperate attempts to fall asleep despite lingering anxiety, but you know he would give you that damn smirk.

And then he would say that you should have said no to him back then. But you both know you would be dead if it weren't for him being around at that time.

Even though you've only spent a month living together, it's like his mannerisms have become too familiar to you. But hopefully he will behave today. After all, your mother has sent your cousin over to visit, though it's most likely to send a spy to make sure you haven't joined a murderous cult or something. Either way, you'll be happy to get this out of the way and actually enjoy your weekend off from work.

A knock on the front door brings you out of your thoughts and you stand up straight, smoothing out your top and leaving the bathroom. As you head to the entrance, you take a quick look around. No sign of him. You pray that he decided to hide out somewhere while you had visitors and finally open the door, putting on your best welcoming smile.

“Hey! Sorry I'm late, I had some trouble finding this place. It's like a maze in this area, how do you deal with it?”

A young woman with a short, light brown pixie cut smiles back and gives a short wave as she greets you. You blink as you look her over, a red dress reaching her knees with matching heels and a shining bracelet on her left wrist (wait, are those pearls?). Sophia always had a way of making you feel just a little bit inferior, especially when she's dressed up with a full set of makeup on her face while you only had on a blouse, shorts, and just a bit of pink blush. You never liked how makeup felt on you. It made you paranoid that something was uneven or it was running down your face. Or you looked like a clown. Yeah, definitely the clown thing.

But enough about that, that's not important. You step aside and ask Sophia about what she has been up to recently as she steps into the complex. It was there that you noticed a small paper bag in her right hand (How did you not notice that before? You're getting less observant by the day).

She notices your curious glance and smiles again as she holds the bag up. “Well, I did stop by a bakery and picked up a little strawberry shortcake. Thought it would make a good snack!”

You nod and smile as you continue to look at the bag, feeling drool begin to pool in your mouth already. Along with taking melatonin, you should actually start eating breakfast in the morning. Lord knows your freeloader nags you about it too, it would be good to shut him up about something.

Speaking of the bastard, where is he anyway? You couldn't be more relieved to see him out of the way, but your paranoia is starting to grow as the casual chat goes on between you and Sophia. After sitting on the couch for about fifteen minutes, sneaking quick peaks around the room
occasionally, you have come to the conclusion that he is not in the living room.

“Well, I'm glad you're doing alright by yourself. I mean, it's already been a month since-” The young woman blinks and looks to the floor for a second before looking back to you, her smile gone and replaced with an awkward expression. “Well,” she pauses, “you know.”

It's alright, you assure her, you've already gotten over the whole thing. Even if you did have a gun pointed at you, you're just happy you made it out of there alive.

“Ugh, don't say that kind of stuff. It makes me think about what would have happened if-” She sighs and waves a hand dismissively. “Never mind, let's stop talking about this.”

You frown, she was the one who brought it up. But before you can make your comment, she's already stood up, taking a small cake out of her bag. True to her word, it does look like a strawberry shortcake.

“Hey, how about we have some of this cake, huh? It would be a waste if we didn't touch it at all!”

You have to admit that she's right and agree as you stand up as well, leading her to the kitchen. As Sophia sets the cake down on the counter, you pull out a small cutting knife to split it up and set that down next to it.

As you grab plates, Sophia continues to make light conversation. You barely pay attention in your excitement to have cake, but you're pretty sure she's talking about her diet and this being her cheat day. As she complains, it only solidifies your belief that diets are not something you are prepared for. Not that you wanted to do something like that to yourself, anyway.

As you make a comment about how you never want to go on a diet, a shrill scream cuts through the room. That was definitely your cousin, and you don't even have to turn around to know what she just screamed at. But just to make sure, you face towards the scene.

Sure enough, Sophia has taken a few steps back, her hand covering her mouth as her eyes threaten to pop out of her skull. On the counter, peeking from behind the sugar jar is a snake, its tongue flicking as it stares at her. Its black scales slightly shine on top of him as it moves further out of hiding.

Damn it, he must have heard there was cake. Honestly, he has no self control when it comes to food.

Before anything drastic can happen, you quickly move to the counter, lightly scolding the black snake as you pick him up with both your hands. He doesn't fight back, his body and tail already curling around your wrists as he makes himself comfortable in your palms. As he slithers on his white underbelly, you continue to berate him. He can't just do as he pleases, some people are afraid of snakes!

Whatever. Save me a piece of cake, would you? I'm hungry.

You grit your teeth as his voice rings in your head, but quickly remember you have a guest and look back to Sophia. Her gaze looks to the intruder, to you, and then to the snake again. She seems to have settled down a bit seeing you handle the snake so calmly, but she keeps her distance anyway. You feel a laugh crawl up your spine, but clear your throat as you explain.

This is Rhys. He's a black rat snake. Don't worry, he's pretty harmless, he was probably curious about what was going on and wanted to check it out.
Oh,” Sophia mumbles and nods to show her understanding, though she refuses to take her eyes off of Rhys. With an attempted smile, she speaks again with her usual peppy tone. “I didn't know you liked snakes.”

You nod and look down to Rhys again, already settled in your hands and barely moving. Yeah, after that whole incident at the bank, someone suggested that you get a pet to distract yourself from the stress of it all. Or something. That's the story you tell everyone, and luckily Sophia believes it.

“That's pretty cool! Um,” she pauses again, “he doesn't bite, does he?”

“He doesn't bite, does he?” Everything can bite, what kind of question is that?

No, he doesn't.

*Might as well ask if I breathe oxygen.*

“Well, I guess they are pretty easy to take care of. You only have to feed them once a week, right?”

It depends on the kind of snake, but yes, they usually eat about once or twice a week.

*Hey, can we maybe stop with the snake facts and have cake?*

No cake for you.

*Come on! At least give me a strawberry!*

You can't help but giggle at his whining, but quickly regain your composure. Sophia is looking at you like you've gone insane, but she quickly stammers out another statement.

“A-Anyway, let's eat!”

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The rest of the visit was relatively peaceful as you moved back to the living room. Despite not being allowed cake, Rhys has made his way up to your neck, staring at the cake as he flicks his tongue again. Eventually, he realizes his attempts to get food would be futile, so he slithers onto the top of the couch and spreads himself out, trying to take up as much area as he can with his skinny body. Still, with a length of about five feet, he still manages to take up more room than he needs to.

After cake, Sophia stands and checks the time on the clock on the wall. “Wow, it's already three o'clock? Time flies when you're having fun, huh? Sorry, but I should get going.”

You nod understandingly, but look to the rest of the cake. About half of it was still left and you mention it to her.

“That's okay, you can have the rest! It would just go to waste if I took it.” She laughs at her own attempt at a joke as you lead her back to the front door. As you get up, you notice Rhys has disappeared again. You hope he's not trying to somehow get a piece of cake, but you're just lying to yourself. You know he's going to have cake one way or another.

After sharing goodbyes, Sophia leaves and you close the door behind her, sighing in relief. That was pretty painless, you think to yourself.

“Ugh, finally. Thought she would never leave.”
And there he is. You turn and glare at the man sitting on the couch, already taking a fork and helping himself to a bit of cake. He doesn't bother to cut a slice, instead choosing to eat from the whole section left. As he pops a frosting covered piece into his mouth, he leans back and closes his eyes, as if dissecting the taste before swallowing.

“Wow, that's sweet. How much sugar is in this? You know too much of a good thing is bad for you, right? It's like humans never understand that.” Despite his criticism, he takes another bite of cake.

You glare at the man as you step towards him. He frowns slightly as he looks up, staring at you with brown and golden eyes. Taking the fork out of his mouth, he swallows the cake and blinks.

“What?”

That was a pretty good scare he gave your guest.

“It was, glad you noticed.” He laughs, a proud smile on his face. “You should have seen the look on her face, it was so good! She was like,” his face contorts, sticking his tongue out as he opens his mouth wide and raises his gloved hands above his head. “’Aaaaah!’” After his recreation, he goes back to his cake, taking another bite as he smiles amusingly.

A smile creeps across your face but you quickly hide it with a scowl. Although as you think of how the situation played out, you're almost glad he didn't appear in his human form. Sure, he was relatively good looking, with slicked back, light brown hair and piercing gaze. But you don't want anyone knowing about your roommate. Or worse, to have someone call him your boyfriend. You shudder at the thought and decide that telling everyone you just had a pet snake was much easier.

After the cake was completely finished, Rhys sits back, a satisfied grin on his face as he licks his lips and lays down on the couch. You give him a blank look, asking if the cake was good.

“Yeah, it was pretty good. I probably have diabetes now, but whatever.”

You roll your eyes as you look down at the lanky man and begin cleaning up everything, picking up plates to wash them later. But as you look at the freeloader on the couch, crossing his legs and beginning to close his eyes, frustration grows.

Okay, if he's going to live with you, maybe he can pick up the slack around here.

Rhys opens his eyes and looks up at you again, one of his eyebrows raised. “What?”

You cross your arms and frown, doing your best to look as pissed off as possible.

A smirk creeps across his face as he sits up. “Really? That's what you're going to do? You know you can't really intimidate people that well, you look more cute than threatening.”

Warmth rises in your cheeks, but you stand your ground.

“Besides, it's not like I laze around all day. I'm doing the grocery shopping, for crying out loud! What more do you want from me?”

For starters, he can do the dishes. And don't even think of starting a guilt trip, you already know you owe your soul to him.

He frowns before laughing again, this time with a sadistic tone. “Yeah, no. You really think I'm going to let you forget about that?”
Your eyes widen as Rhys stares at you, a glint in his left eye as it seems to shine gold.

Oh no. You know too well what's going to happen next.

The room blurs, your body locked in position as you can't help but stare at Rhys and his damn eyes. That smirk appears again, sharp and condescending as he stands up and approaches you. You always forget how tall he is compared to you, standing about a head taller than you are.

“It's always my favorite part.” His voice rings, interrupting any thought you might have had. “The poor victim on their last breath, wanting revenge on who would dare hurt them. A sweet talker, telling them that there was a way to get it. All they had to do was offer their soul and let them be owned for the remainder of their days in this world.” He chuckles again as he stares into you, causing your breath to freeze in your lungs. You know you'll be free if you look away, but you know at this point that your body won't allow you to do that.

His voice, smooth as silk, continues to penetrate your mind. “You know you're going to die. Everything does eventually. But it scared you. You didn't want it to happen today. Maybe in the future you'll be ready, but not now.”

Rhys brings his right hand up, and you brace yourself as he gently brushes his fingertips on your cheek. A powerful sensation runs through your body, down your spine and traveling through your muscles. You bite your lower lip, not wanting to give him the satisfaction of what this is doing to you by making any sound.

You hear another laugh as he brings his hand away for a moment. “It's okay, we're the only ones here. I won't make fun of you if you make any noise. Probably.”

God, he's such a bastard.

It takes most of your strength to call him out, and you almost laugh at the surprise appearing on him for a second. But his hand comes back, this time cupping your cheek. As the sensation comes back, more powerful than before, you gasp and accidentally moan as he continues to stare back at you. He squints slightly, clearly amused by this reaction and brushes his thumb against your lips.

“It always amazes me how much a few pheromones can do to a human. I love it so much.”

You pant, refusing to believe that your body could feel this good just from him touching you. Even though you know Rhys is a demon, it's still hard to believe this is the same guy who was whining for a piece of cake.

“I can probably make you beg right now if I wanted to. Mercy, my cock, anything. And it would be so satisfying to watch, too.”

Oh no. You can't tell what kind of expression you're making, but it has obviously amused your roommate as he gives a wide smile.

“What, are you not in the mood? I bet I could get you into it if you give me a few more seconds.”

Agonizing moments tick by before Rhys finally releases his hand and looks to the kitchen. The living room fades back into reality, causing you to blink and shake your head to snap yourself out of it. Your whole body feels hot, especially your cheeks. You don't have to look in a mirror to know you're red as a tomato right now.

“Actually, maybe not. I'm hungry again.”
Yep, there's the freeloader again. You would be relieved if it weren't for the fact he can pull this shit whenever he wants. You should have known he would enjoy torturing you, isn't that what demons do? Rhys is the only one you know, but you assume every demon likes torturing their victims.

“Here, since I'm heading there, I'll clean the dishes this time.”

You blink and look at the man, smiling warmly as he picks up everything and turns to the kitchen. “See, I'm helping! This is what you want, right?” Yeah, but he didn't have to be such a dick about it. That last minute was entirely unnecessary.

“Thanks for the cake!” He calls before turning a corner, leaving your field of vision.

As soon as you're sure he can't see you, you rush to your bedroom, close the door behind you, grab your pillow, and scream into it.

Dammit, how could you think he was hot!? He wants your soul, for crying out loud!! You failure of a human being!!

After your tantrum, you fall back on the bed, suddenly exhausted. Staring up at the ceiling, you can't help but think of how Rhys made you feel just then. You haven't felt something like that in a long time.

You almost want him to go all the way with you, just once.

Wait, did you just think that? Oh my god, you did. You're calling yourself out, you just thought about Rhys in a situation that is definitely NC-17. So gross. Ew. Shame on you.

You lay on your right side, facing the wall as you try to compromise with yourself. It's the lingering pheromones, you tell yourself. Once you sleep it off, you'll be back to your old self again.

As you close your eyes, you can't help but think of how impossible that is now.
Yay, flashback!

You recognize that model. That's a Hyperion pistol, the kind that they just released last month. From what you've heard, they're supposed to be more accurate than any other kind of gun out there. You overheard a coworker brag about how he shot a spider across the room with it. Though you doubt the story being actually true, the picture he took of the new hole in the wall was slightly impressive. Just slightly. (At least it wasn't Tediore, you heard their weapons have a tendency to blow up in people's hands.)

But more importantly, you recognize the man pointing it at you. You sold that gun to him just last week. Looks like this is how he's returning the favor, by aiming it between your eyes in the middle of a bank. As a crowd of hostages watch, terror in their faces, the attacker gives a sympathetic look.

“Nothing personal, babe. It's just business.”

Questions run marathons through you. Why doesn't the gun shop you work at mandate background checks? Why are you still going to the bank to deposit checks when there are systems to do that for you? And is he using enough hair gel? He looks like he's using a lot of hair gel.

You notice you have a tendency to ask unimportant questions in stressful moments.

“Hey.”

Hm? Oh, he's still talking to you.

The man blinks and looks at you, tiredness in his gaze. “Look, it's really simple. You give me all the money you have on you and I'll let you off the hook.” He kneels down to meet your gaze, still pointing the pistol at you. “You seem like a good person. It would be a shame if I have to shoot you, but if you don't cooperate and I don't kill you, someone else will.”

Wait, you remember him. August. Yeah, he stopped by the shop the other day. He seemed like an alright guy at the time. Besides, you were told by your boss not to ask questions to any customer. Not even when he bought several SMG rounds along with the pistol. But you've helped more shady people out, so you didn't think too much of it when he stopped in.

Except now you're starting to regret every choice you've made in your life as you reach into your pocket to grab your wallet. As your hands shake, August watches them closely, most likely to make sure you aren't going to pull out a weapon of your own. Whatever, you think, it's just a couple bucks. You keep repeating that to yourself as you show the robber your wallet, peacefully handing it to him.

Gingerly, he takes it, a mix of satisfaction and relief as he does so. “See? That wasn't so hard, was it?”

Still, you find yourself unable to move, continuing to stare down the barrel of the pistol pointed at
you. But a soft beeping stains the silent few seconds in the room, causing you to frown in
confusion. August notices the sound too and looks to the source as he stands up, finally putting his
weapon down to his side.

“Did I say you guys could-”

An immense boom interrupts his calm question as the floor seems to shake. A sharp pain shoots
through the back of your skull to the front as a black curtain falls over your eyes.

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“Huh. Didn't expect that.”

Fuck, your head hurts. You can't help but groan as you try to sit up, but find yourself unable to.

“Hey, take it easy. You just died, don't move around too much.”

Wait, what?

A faint, blue light floods into your vision as you finally open your eyes. The word 'modern' is the
first thing to pop into your head as you lay on your side, seeing the unfamiliar room before you. It
looks like an office, complete with a desk topped with just a laptop. At least you think it's a laptop,
your vision is still a bit blurred. But it's definitely black with a blue outline.

But more importantly, a figure is leaning against it, flipping through a small packet in his gloved
hands. Though you can't recognize any details on his face, you do know that he's a skinny thing,
probably at least six feet in height, possibly an inch shorter than that. It's not like you had a ruler on
you, but that's your best guesstimate.

“Okay, did you just hear what I just said? I feel like you didn't, you're not really reacting to it.”

After needlessly thinking about the stranger's height, you blink to clear your vision and look up at
him. He's stepped closer, meaning you can make out the delicate features on his face. Not so
delicate is his gaze. You've never met someone with heterochromia, his right eye being a deep
brown and his left a shining gold. His hair is slicked back, though two strands of brown hair hang
freely on his forehead.

Yeah, you heard. Something about dying, but that doesn't make sense to you. If you're dead, how
are you moving around and talking to this guy?

The man sighs and rubs the back of his neck, frowning as he looks to the side. “Yeah, here come
the questions,” he mumbles before looking down at you. “It's like this. You're not alive right now.
And while you're not alive, you're going to be stuck here until I figure something out with you.”

Where exactly is here?

“You religious at all?”

You can't say for sure. It's not like you go to church every Sunday, but you like to think there's a
place you go to after you die. At least that gives you a bit of comfort.

Wait, is this the afterlife?

“You could say that.”

You blink as you absorb this information, but another question slips out of you as you frown at the
stranger.

Then who is he?

He pauses for a second before answering. “I guess to you, I'm one of the bad guys. I don't know, people call me different things depending on what kind of people they are.” He waves his hand dismissively as he talks, but finally sits down on a simple chair nearby. “What do you call someone who works in the afterlife?”

You struggle to sit up to match his posture, but finally do so, though your head is still pounding. Well, you can think of two things this guy could be. He could be an angel, but he called himself a bad guy and you're pretty sure angels represent good.

Your eyes widen and a sudden feeling of dread washes over you.

“Come on, what's the other one?”

The man seems disinterested in your mood change as he leans on an arm of the chair, his hand propping his head up by the cheek.

Needless to say, he's more than surprised when you suddenly jump up and have a breakdown in front of him.

Okay, no. No way you're dead, and no way you're in hell. You were just at the bank depositing a check, what even happened there? There was a stupid bank robbery with a stupid guy you sold a gun to and then there was a stupid explosion which gave you a stupid headache and why are you even here? It's not like you did anything really bad or anything. You never committed any kind of crime and you never killed anyone. You never even had sex before! Wait, you masturbate occasionally, does that count?

“No, but-”

Wait, you work at a gun shop/shooting range. You've sold guns to people so technically you've helped people kill others? Does that count as a sin?

“We're getting off track really quickly.”

No, you think you're perfectly on topic.

An exasperated sigh could be heard behind your rambling before the man calmly stands up and grabs you by the shoulders. He stares at you, and you're forced to stare back. A glimmer in his left eye causes every muscle in your body to freeze. The new sensation does nothing to calm your nerves, but it has stopped your monologue on morality.

“Sit down.”

You do so, sitting back down on the couch as he lets go of you. As he looks back to his packet, scanning through it once again, you feel your muscles loosen up again. If you weren't such a wreck right now, you would have interrogated that guy on how he controlled you like that. But you're distracted by other things right now.

“Okay, says here cause of death was a bit of shrapnel shooting through your head, severely damaging your brain and nervous system, killing you instantly. Or at least relatively quickly, I was never good with physical human biology.” He looks at you, that intimidating expression staying put. “I would ask if that sounded right to you, but my guess is you weren't even aware of that
happening at the time.”

No, you wouldn't think so if it killed you instantly. Wow, that feels weird to say out loud.

“Right. So here's where I give you a choice.”

You immediately pay full attention to him as he mentions this new step.

“It's a traditional thing. I haven't seen anyone actually say yes to this, but I need to let you know about it, anyway.” He leans forward, seeming to stare deeply into your gaze again. You don't feel your body freeze up like it did before, but that doesn't help with the tension in the air.

“Since it doesn't look like you did anything really good or bad, you're gonna be sent somewhere in the middle until the higher ups figure out what to do with you. But from what I hear, the wait time is...” He purses his lips as he thinks of his phrasing. “Well, imagine waiting in the back of a line full of everyone who has died for the past, let's say, one hundred years.”

You blink. If you remember correctly, about fifty five million people die on an average year, and you don't have to do math to know that number times a hundred is a shitton of people. No, a fuckton.

A smirk appears on the man's face, clearly amused by your reaction. “I don't have to prod you to know you don't like that.”

Yeah, no way. You're introverted enough as it is.

“Then here's where I give you your second option.”

The smirk grows, the kind of smirk someone gives when they find the perfect blackmail. Instinctively, you gulp, getting the feeling you know what his offer is. Knowing he has your full attention, he raises the documents up so you can see them.

“You see these papers? You probably figured this out already, but this basically shows your entire history, from birth all the way up to your death. Since you're dead, this isn't going to update itself anymore. But I know how to keep it going.”

You almost want to finish his sentence for him.

“All you have to do is give your soul to me the next time you die.”

Yep, you knew it. But that doesn't help the dread in your stomach. What exactly do demons do with souls, anyway?

“You think I'm just going to tell you that?”

No, you didn't think so. But it didn't hurt to try.

The man stands up again, walking to his desk and placing the papers down onto it. “You give your soul to me, I'll make a little edit at the ending here. You won't have died, you'll have survived your close brush with death, everything will be peaches and cream and your life can begin playing itself out again.” He squints slightly as he leans forward on his desk, resting his elbows on top and interlocking his fingers as he sits down. “But from that day on, you're mine.”

Your chest squeezes, making it harder to breathe. You never thought of someone owning you, and you're not sure what exactly he means by that. But you can't take this. You didn't ask for this. You
didn't want to die.

“Oh, and don't worry. I'll be keeping an eye on you to make sure you don't try anything stupid like get an exorcist or something.” He looks to the side, mumbling to himself. “It's not like they're real or anything. They're never the real deal from what I heard.”

Your voice catches in your throat the first time you answer, but after clearing it, you manage to get it out.

You accept.

The man looks back, his eyes widened with something. Shock? Wait, did he not expect you to say yes? You frown at his reaction, but the demon notices and clears his throat, suddenly standing up again.

“So you're taking it? The deal, I mean?”

Yeah, why does he act so surprised?

“What? I'm not! Just,” he raises a hand up in a 'stop' motion. “Okay. I'm going to edit your papers, just give me a second.”

Okay. You observe him as he grabs a pen, scratching something out and writing something else to replace. You can't help but be disappointed, you were expecting something cooler. The pen is glowing a cool blue as the man writes, but that's about it. From a demon, you were expecting more pyrotechnics.

After the soft sound of scribbling ceases, he flips the paper over face down and walks over to you, this time taking a spot next to you on the couch.

“Allright, it's done. In a few minutes, you'll be alive again so you can do,” he pauses, “whatever it is you do.”

Sounds fine to you. But before you forget, you should probably know who you just made a deal with. A name will do just fine.

The man blinks, a faint blush tinting his cheeks as he absentmindedly scratches one. “I guess names are important, huh? Alright, fair enough.” He gives the faintest smile as he puts his hand down. “It's Rhys. It's nice to meet you.”

You open your mouth to give your name in return, but Rhys interrupts by saying your name first. You shut up instantly, you should have guessed that piece of info would have been in your documents.

“Before you go, we need to seal the deal we just made. But, uh,” he takes a deep breath, making you suspicious of what his request will be, “you need to close your eyes.”

You frown, but he gives a shrug back. What, is this another traditional thing?

“Kinda. Look, just trust me on this.”

That's hilarious. But you humor him and close your eyes.

“Thank you. And don't open your eyes until I say so.”

That's not suspicious at all. Nope. There is no way he's going to pull something weird on you.
You hear a soft breath and a quiet “okay” before you feel a thumb on your chin, followed by a finger underneath to hold your face steady. You unintentionally gulp, straining to keep your eyes closed.

Something soft touches your lips, shocking you and making you take a sharp intake of air. Your hands clench into fists as the pieces quickly put themselves together.

This deal is literally being sealed with a kiss. Not even the cheesiest of fiction could have prepared you for this. Something tells you Rhys isn't into this like you aren't, but his body heat is undeniably comforting. Or something like that. Your mind is too scrambled by the sudden kiss to think of a proper word for this situation.

After another second agonizingly passing by, the kiss is released. There is another sigh before you hear another direction.

“When you're ready, open your eyes.”

You instantly do so.

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“Hey.”

You groan and turn over on the bed, ignoring the pestering voice.

“Hey, it's six o'clock. It's not good to nap this late.”

A finger pokes your cheek, forcing you to wake up and look to the intruder with groggy eyes. Rhys is standing over you, giving a smirk as he sees you rise and shine.

“If you nap too late, it's going to mess up your inner sleep clock. Or something like that. But I'm not going to let you ruin that.”

You sneer, why can't he just let you sleep whenever you damn please?

“You're not sleeping the whole day. It's not healthy.”

He's not healthy.

Rhys purses his lips as he looks on, unamused. “You wanna order pizza?”

Actually, pizza sounds good. You sit up on the bed and stretch, groaning as you hear a bone crack. You almost laugh as you see Rhys visibly cringe at the sound.

“And maybe see a chiropractor?”

You don't want to do that.

“Fine, I guess I can't get you to do everything. You and your damn free will.”

You roll your eyes, but suddenly think of something. You call his attention again.

“Yeah?”

Can you ask him something? It's about your deal.
“You're not actually mine until you die again. I may be bossy, but I can't really make you do anything you don't want to do.”

While comforting to know, that's not what you were going to ask. Oh, and he needs to be honest.

A chuckle escapes Rhys. “Weird thing to say to someone like me, but fine. What do you want to know?”

Is making the deal itself really his favorite part of his job? You can't help but think of how he said that during your...you know.

His eyes shoot open as he stutters out an answer. “Well, yeah! I mean, there are other parts of the job I like but it's not like I just like one thing about it!”

You frown and lead on with another question. How many deals has he made before he met you?

Silence fills the room as Rhys looks side to side, seeming to look for a distraction that doesn't exist before waving his hand and answering. “That's none of your business!”

You were just curious, he doesn't have to be nervous about it.

“I'm not nervous! Just don't interrogate me about it! Ever!”

If you're his first one, he doesn't have to get defensive about it.

“That's it, you're getting anchovies on your half.”

Wait, no! Anchovies are the bane of pizza existence! Throwing all maturity out the window, you tackle Rhys just as he reaches for your cell phone on the side table.

“Hey, give that back!”

No way! This is your cell phone and you're making the order! Stop stealing your shit!

“I know what I said about free will, but you're getting anchovies!”

The hell you are! He's the one getting anchovies!

“No I'm not!”

Yes he is!

“What are you, five!?”

Look who's talking!

~

Something like fifteen minutes pass before the two of you, battered and bruised, make a truce. No anchovies. Ever. And peace was returned to this humble abode.

For now.
Next chapter is going to have a really handsome guy. That is all.
Marcus Kincaid scares you.

Not in the 'he's your boss and he's intimidating, you shouldn't be slacking off when he's around' way. It's more in the way of 'oh God, he would and has shot someone for trying to get a refund in his store'. But it's most likely a combination of both.

Today was a good example of that as a customer had come in, an assault rifle in his hands. Judging from the camouflage paint job, you assumed it was Dahl. That seems to be something most of their weapons share. Anyway, the scrawny man (who doesn't look like he's older than eighteen years old), had been more than happy to share the main problem with the gun. Supposedly, the magazine in the chamber won't budge, so he can't reload it.

“That is a problem.” A familiar face, words tinted with a Russian accent, had stepped out from the shooting range next door, his heavy footsteps carrying him to the two of you. As he does, you notice the customer has shrunk back, his demeanor significantly less confident than when he first walked in. As always, Marcus's reputation has been heard in strained whispers along the streets.

“I am sorry,” he apologizes to you as he steps behind the counter, “I could not help but overhear your conversation. The gun won't reload, you say?” He asks, turning to the customer, causing the man to stand up straight with frightened eyes.

“N-No, it won't.”

Marcus slowly nods and puts both hands forward. “May I see the gun?”

The man nods and hands over the assault rifle, hands beginning to shake. Marcus turns it over in his hands, focusing on the cartridge sticking from the bottom. He frowns before finally grabbing the cartridge and pulling at it. With a clack, the magazine pops out with almost no resistance.

You and the customer blink, trade a glance, and look at back at Marcus, who begins to laugh at your reactions. “There! You see, it is not broken! Just use a little elbow grease, yes?”

The man chuckles sheepishly, a faint sweat breaking out as Marcus replaces the discarded cartridge with a new one. “You're right,” he stammers, “I guess I didn't-“

A loud bang reverberates throughout the room, interrupting his speech. The two of you jump at the sound, and you instinctively brace yourself for a pained yell. To your relief, it doesn't come. But looking to Marcus and seeing where the gun is pointed, you guide yourself to the likely spot to where the bullet could have ended up.

On the wall at the front of the shop, just a few feet and to the left of where the man is currently standing, is a small hole in the wall. A small, white pile of dust has formed on the floor, indicating that the wall was indeed just shot with an assault rifle.

As you put the pieces together, Marcus continues to laugh. “You see? Good as new! There is no other problem, is there?”

Before the man could respond, you had already taken the gun back, given it to the customer and
pushed him out the door, wishing him a good day and slamming the door shut behind him. As soon as the ordeal is over, you sigh in relief and turn to the new mess on the floor, frowning at the new task you have.

Meanwhile, Marcus had already discarded the old magazine and mumbles something you can't understand before addressing you. “Are there any other problems currently?”

No, you think you've got things covered.

“Excellent!”

But he didn't have to shoot at something to make a point.

“Young lady,” he scolds, “you have told me many times how blood is hard to clean up, so I promised not to actually shoot anyone in the foot. But how else would I make a point to the customer that he is a fool?”

He could have just told that guy it was a little hard to reload.

Marcus scoffs. “Dahl weapons are made for soldiers. Of course you need some muscle to use them properly!”

Face it, this is an argument you can't win. You suppress a sigh and go to grab the vacuum.

“Just cut out a picture from one of the magazines and pin it up in front of the hole. Looks sloppy, otherwise!”

~

While you appreciate the warm weather, you don't appreciate how damn hot it is right now. Walking out of the gun shop after your shift is like being sent into an oven. Already, sweat is starting to bead on your forehead. You should head home before Rhys spends the entire budget on air conditioning.

As you turn to head home, absentmindedly thinking, you picture the freeloader laying in front of a fan, smiling with content as the cool breeze flies by. God, you hate that image. Wait, maybe he likes the heat. Since he can be a snake and snakes are cold-blooded, he could be sunbathing right now. You can't tell if that image is more or less frustrating. Everything about Rhys is frustrating in general. At least he goes grocery shopping. For some reason, that guy has a good sense for what goes well with what. (One time he made you try dipping french fries in ice cream. You're still convinced his weird demon powers made you think it tasted good.)

The dryness in your throat becomes more obvious as you walk along. At this point, your body is probably going to sweat everything out of you. That may be exaggeration, but you're not taking that risk! Looking around, you notice that by the general store down the block is a vending machine. Wow, convenient timing, ho!

It doesn't take long before a cold water bottle is in your hands and you gingerly grab at the cap.

But it slips, preventing you from making a firm grip. You look at your hands and quickly wipe them on your pants, they're probably sweaty.

You try again. Your hand slips again. Okay, maybe it's the bottle. You place the bottle cap underneath your shirt, using it as a cloth to open it.
The cap continues to slip from your grasp. So it's going to be one of those stubborn assholes.

The battle continues as you sit down at a bench, squeezing the bottle with your knees and attempting to open it. Again, your hand slips.

You grip onto the cap with your teeth, fighting through the resistance as you push against it. This was a battle you had to win, for justice! For glory! Or hydration!

“You having some trouble there, princess?”

A new voice knocks you out of your battle and you turn your head toward it, freezing as you see the stranger pestering you.

The word 'sharp' enters your mind as you look at the tanned man standing before you, an amused smirk on his face. From his jawline to his eyebrows, everything about his is sharp and well defined. His hair, brown with a hint of gray from a single streak, is slicked back, though you swear you could see a slight glisten of hair gel in the sun.

But the number one thing catching your eye is a scar on his face, taking up a large area of it. Representing an upside down ‘v’, it starts at the bottom of his right cheek, tilted up to the left of his forehead, and back down through his left cheek, cutting through his left eye. Even though he wears aviator shades, it doesn't do much to hide this disfigurement.

A whistle redirects your attention away from the scar and back to the conversation at hand.

“Come on, tell me what you're gonna try next. You're gonna bang it against the wall like a crazed monkey, right?” He berates you as he looks down at you, not doing anything to hide his amusement. “No, wait! You got a knife on you?”

No, you don't.

“Aww, I wanted to see you accidentally cut yourself using it or something! Oh man, what if you lost a finger trying to open a stupid water bottle?” The jackass laughs. “Wouldn't that be embarrassing??”

Doesn't he have something better to do?

“No really. You're the most fun I've had all day, kiddo.”

Great, you're glad you're doing a good job entertaining him.

“You're welcome.”

That was sarcastic.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever. Here.”

He reaches a hand down, causing you to look at it in confusion. The man sighs, rolling his eyes before gesturing to the water bottle.

“The bottle. Give it here, I'll open it for ya.”

You blink, surprised at this sudden act of kindness and hand it over to the stranger. With no effort, he springs the cap loose, removing it and giving it back to you.

“There. Now you don't have to look like you're having a spaz attack. Again, you're welcome.”
You frown at his words but pay him no mind, taking a large gulp of water and sighing with content. Water always seems to taste good when you're parched.

You turn to give the man your thanks, but stop as he proceeds to take a seat next to you on the bench. He sighs as he relaxes, crossing his legs and resting his arms on the back of the bench.

Out of politeness, you ask if the man is alright.

“I'm fine. Just thinking of how hot it is right now.”

It's hot as hell, isn't it?

“Yeah, that's a good way of putting it.”

This is getting really awkward real quick. You grab your cell phone to pretend to talk to someone so you'll have an excuse to get away.

“Hey.”

You freeze, why is he still talking to you!?

“You wanna help me out with something? I mean, I did just save you from dying of thirst, I should be getting something in return from it.”

Trapped, you have no choice but to ask what his favor is.

“Don't worry, it's real simple. Anyone can do it. But I figured, 'Hey, this lady seems trustworthy, maybe she can do me a solid and help me find someone who's run off on me'.” He turns to you and flashes a smile, though you're more distracted by the scar again. How does someone get something like that on their face? “Think you could help me out?”

You think about it for a moment, trying to look into the man's eyes instead of his scar. Of course, that's made difficult by the shades and the fact that it's taking up most areas of his face. But you nod, agreeing to tell the man whatever you know about who he's looking for.

The stranger looks at you skeptically for a moment before smiling again, patting you on the shoulder. “I knew you could help me out, cupcake!”

But could he maybe not give you weird nicknames? You have a real name, and you tell him so.

The stranger nods halfheartedly. “Alright, fine. If we're trading names, I should tell you mine. Man, I am giving you so many things today, you better have what I need!”

You bite your tongue, resisting the urge to make a comment as he introduces himself.

“The name's Jack. Now stop twisting my arm and help me out.”

You don't know when you did any arm twisting, but the growl in his voice indicates his patience fading. You only nod and watch as he reaches into his pocket and pulls out his phone, pressing a few buttons before showing a picture to you.

Your breath stops. That's Rhys. It looks like he's looking through a file as he's walking down a hall, an expression of intense concentration on him. The picture is a little blurred, but it's definitely him.

Jack notices your reaction and presses you. “You see this guy before?”
With an unintentional gulp, you look up to Jack, frowning at you as he waits for an answer. Though
his shades are covering his gaze, you can definitely feel them staring straight into you, as if he
were digging through your most personal thoughts.

You know you said you would help him, but your wish to run away from the situation makes you
shake your head. Nope, he doesn't look familiar at all.

“Really? You're not lying to me, are you?”

You can't imagine why you would want to lie to him.

Your heart beats faster as he continues staring at you in disbelief before it finally fades away into
another smirk.

“See? That wasn't so hard, was it?” He chuckles as he pats your right shoulder, his hand lingering
there for a moment before taking it away. The air around you feels like it's choking you, making
your chest tighten as he stands up again. “Oh well, guess I'll have to keep looking. But thanks for
the input, anyway! You enjoy the summer, huh?”

After finally finding your voice again, you return the farewells and watch Jack walk off, putting his
phone away in his back pocket and mumbling to himself.

You finally remember how to breath again and do so. Intentional or not, that guy scared the crap
out of you.

~

After returning home, still a bit in shock from recent events, you almost forget to react to the black
rat snake sitting in the sink, his head resting on the edge as his body is submerged in water.

Um, okay. What the hell is Rhys doing?

What does it look like? I'm taking a bath.

But you have a bathtub very near where he is right now.

You were complaining about how you were now spending money on two people, so I thought I
would help out a little bit by not using so much hot water. That's why I'm here.

That is fucking hilarious, you say with a straight face.

Now that you know why there's a snake in your sink, could you maybe go away? I'd like some
privacy.

As much as you would like letting him continue with saving warm water, your encounter with Jack
has left you with some questions. But part of you is wondering what Jack means to Rhys. You're
worried he's going to freak out on you if you bring him up, but you still need to know what he did
before you met him. Probably would be best to ask him in a roundabout way.

The snake perks up a bit. Something wrong? You're more quiet than usual.

Just get it out of the way. You ask Rhys what exactly his job was when he was still in hell?
(Unbelievable how saying that still feels weird.)

Where did this come from?
You were just curious, that's all.

Rhys pauses before answering. *I was a closer. You know, find people who've died and try to get a deal with them.*

That's all he did?

*Yep.* Another pause before his voice rings in your head again. *Are you sure you're alright?*

Yeah, you're fine. You tell Rhys to have a nice bath and head out of the bathroom.

*Uh, okay. Weirdo.*

He's the weirdo for relaxing in the bathroom sink.

*I'm saving water! You'll thank me later!*

Chapter End Notes

I would have gotten this out sooner, but of course my computer had to corrupt the document I was typing in. I didn't lose too much, but damn was it annoying. Also, I apologize to anyone who actually knows how guns work.
The Part Where Everything Goes To Shit

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

You don't know why you thought a puzzle game would help you calm down. If anything, it's only making you more stressed as you stare at your phone. Just get the taxi to the other side of the screen by moving the other cars around. But as you move cars around, trying to find the solution in this mess, the urge to throw your phone begins to grow. Finally putting your pride aside, your finger lingers on the hint button.

"Wait, try moving the blue car up and the green one to the left."

You don't have to turn around to know that's Rhys behind you, taking the position of backseat driver. But you do as he says, following his directions. As you look at the new conditions, the pieces of the puzzle slowly fit together as you finally clear a path for the taxi. Satisfaction washes over you as the game flashes a sign congratulating you.

"Told you."

But the next level pops up immediately after, and the two of you pause as you see the cluster of cars blocking your path. This one is definitely going to take a while.

Rhys takes a sharp intake of breathe and begins to walk to the kitchen. "Yeah, good luck with that one."

Gee, thanks. You turn off the game and put your phone away, you've had enough of puzzles for a bit.

"You want some watermelon?"

Hell yeah! Wait, he got watermelon today? You ask that as you follow the voice to the kitchen.

"Yeah, it's good weather for it."

You're surprised he can slice a watermelon considering how skinny he is. Sure enough, Rhys has a container in his hands as he closes the fridge, filled to the brim with sliced watermelon.

"I don't mean to brag, but I can tear one open with my bare hands if I wanted to." He gives a smug grin, which you return with a playful roll of your eyes. "But I didn't want to make a mess. Using a knife is good enough."

You're glad he's so considerate.

"I try to be."

But you hope he doesn't mind you saying that he looks really hot.

"Wait, what?"

His clothes. Goddamn, he needs to let you finish a thought.

"Stop being so suggestive, then."
His choice of clothing is always questionable, though. Even though it's the summer, he's still wearing a long sleeved shirt and gloves. He's got shorts on, but that can't be enough to stay cool.

Rhys sighs and places the bowl of fruit on the table. "Yes, I'm fine with the way I dress. No, I'm not going to overheat."

You still think it's a little weird.

"I will dump this bowl over your head."

Please don't.

But as Rhys opens his mouth to reply, a smirk creeping across his face, the doorbell rings. He frowns at the sound and turns to you. "You expecting someone?"

No, but maybe it's a Jehovah's witness.

"Ew, don't be gross."

He pops a piece of watermelon in his mouth as you go to the front door, thinking of who could want to see you. And you were just settling down to have a snack! This better be important, you think as you open the door.

"Hey, pumpkin!"

As soon as you see Jack's face, you slam the door shut.

Shit. Shit, shit, shit. Why is he here? How did he find out where you live? And how are you going to hide Rhys? Is it worth warning him? What if he's on hell's equivalent of the FBI's most wanted list and you're preventing his capture? What has he even done, anyway? The most he's done to you is make you feel tingly and also broke one of your glasses once.

"Who was that?"

You turn around to face Rhys, but he seems to have noticed how pale your face has gotten. "You alright? You look like you've seen a ghost."

Just as the doorbell rings a second time, you quickly walk over to Rhys and desperately look around for a place he can hide. Sure, he's being hunted down, but he's the guy who gave you a second chance and you figure you should at least help him out a bit.

Wait, duh! He can be a snake! You tell him to do so.

"Wait, right now?"

Yes!

"But I just got out watermelon."

You guys can have watermelon later!

"Seriously, what is your problem?"

There is no problem! Just go away for a minute! The third time the doorbell rings (seriously, that guy can't take a hint!), your patience has run thin. Hastily, you push Rhys down the hall and into the spare bedroom, closing the door behind him just as he opens his mouth to protest.
After catching your breath and making sure you don't look like you just pushed a guy into the bedroom, you calmly make your way to the front door and open it again. Jack is still there, crossing his arms and scowling. "You always shut the door in people's faces?"

Only when you need to, you think. But instead of saying that, you ask Jack as politely as you can what he's doing here.

Jack responds by holding a black leather wallet, which you immediately recognize as your own. "You dropped this. And because I'm such a nice, caring guy, I thought I would follow the address in here and return it to the person who owns it. And hey! Look at this, it turns out to be you!" He pulls out your ID from the wallet, solidifying that this is really yours.

You thank Jack and hold out your hand for the wallet, but the jerkwad doesn't get the signal and continues talking. "You sure you alright? I heard some noise after, you know, you shut the door on me and left me out here without even saying hi, which is really rude, by the way!" His voice cuts through you like a dagger, leaning forward and staring down at you as he waits for an answer.

Okay, finding an excuse for that is incredibly difficult. But you tell him you heard the phone ring and you wanted to do that before dealing with him.

"I didn't hear a phone."

Your phone is on vibrate. In your pocket, you add.

"Okay."

You nod, looks like he bought your lie.

"You're pulling that out of your ass, but okay."

Never mind.

"How about this? I'll give your wallet back when you tell me what you were really doing."

Um. Wow, okay. You didn't know you were going to be interrogated today.

"Don't test me, princess. I know you have him in here."

Who?

"You think I don't know about you?"

What?

"You were the last human Rhys talked to before he ran off. He knows he's not authorized to do these deals, but that didn't stop him, did it?"

Your eyes widen as you take a step back. Jack chuckles, a sadistic grin on his face as he takes a step forward to match yours.

"Not so cheeky now, are you?"

How does he know Rhys, anyway?

"You could say I'm his boss. Nice to meet the girl he got his chance of leaving from." He takes another step forward, you take another step back, his gaze burning into you even with his shades.
What does Jack mean when he said Rhys ran off? Isn't his job to make deals and make sure you don't tattle on him about it?

"Yeah," he inhales sharply, "here's the thing. This whole 'living with you' thing was never a part of the deal. He just said that so he would have an excuse to come up here."

You blink, not quite believing what Jack was telling you. Then what about stuff like exorcists?

Jack bursts out laughing. "Is that really what he told you? He thinks an exorcist has a chance to take down someone like him? News flash, princess! He's been lying to you!"

No way. Why would someone rise someone from the dead just so they can be here on Earth? What's the point of that, you can't think of anything a demon would want up here!

"You and me both, kiddo. But I'm not leaving until I see that prick in front of me. Preferably begging or crying. Or both! Both would be awesome!" He steps further into the house, his arms spread out dramatically as he yells out. "So come on, Rhysie! Make this easier on all of us and I won't slowly rip you limb from limb! I'll do it much quicker!"

You cringe at the threats, but don't say anything. Right now, you would like some answers, preferably from Rhys's side of the story Jack told you. So he fibbed some things about the deal? Why? You rack your brain trying to figure out what his motive could be, but you can't think of anything. Sure, he's kind of a pain to deal with as a roommate, but he's never done anything suspicious as far as you know. He makes light threats and messes with your mind sometimes, but he's never done anything to hurt you intentionally. At least he's mostly kept his space.

A few seconds pass before it becomes obvious Rhys isn't going to show up to save you. Jack sighs, frustrated as he reaches in his jacket pocket. "Fine. Guess we'll have to do this the hard way." He quickly pulls his hand out of his pocket, a flash of light quickly blocking his hand from view. The next second, you're staring down the barrel of a pistol, pure yellow with a spot of black along the top.

Deja vu. But that doesn't make this situation less terrifying, especially with that grin on Jack's face.

"Enlighten me, pumpkin. Did Rhys tell you what happens when you die?"

Yes he did. When you die, your soul is officially his.

"Look at that, he didn't leave you in the dust on that end. But you left out the part where you're stuck in hell for eternity."

You figured that's what would happen. But Rhys can't just travel back and forth from there to here whenever he wants?

"There's a process to everything. When you're the boss of everything like I am, you can skip all that and do whatever you want. But Rhys is too impatient. I'm just trying to make a point. Patience is a virtue!" He yells out his last sentence as the pistol clicks, loading a shot.

Wait, he's going to kill you to send Rhys back.

"Look at you, using deductive reasoning! Remind me to give you a prize when we get home." Jack's finger goes to the trigger. "Oh, and since Rhys broke the rules, I'll just be going ahead and taking custody of your soul while he's going through stuff. Don't worry, I'll be sure to take REAL good care of you." He purrs as your heart drops. No big deal, just spending all of eternity with a lunatic!
Shit. You close your eyes and brace for impact as you hear a gunshot ring out.

Nothing happens. You don't feel pain or anything that would indicate the shot hit you. A bullet shell clatters onto the floor and you risk opening your eyes to see what has happened.

"Oh, that's hot! That's really hot!"

Rhys is standing in front of you, grimacing as he drops something on the floor and stomps on it. After taking his sandal away, a black pile of soot is all that remains of the bullet. At least you think it was a bullet. Either way, that is going to be hell to clean up.

"Ugh, finally!" Jack groans as the gun disappears in another flash of light from his hand. "You are the worst at taking signals. Hello?? I'm threatening your human, you may want to react quicker than that!"

Rhys doesn't pay attention to Jack's exasperation and instead turns to you, looking you over. "You alright?"

Yeah, you're fine. You think. But you're not hurt anywhere.

"Good."

"What are you even doing!? Souls are the end goal, why don't you want her dead??"

Jack just said he would gain custody of your soul since Rhys is in trouble. Wow, you should start a counter for weird things you've said in the past month.

"Okay, that's true."

"Do you ever shut up?" Rhys turns around back to Jack, deeply glaring into him with his gold eye glowing brighter than ever before. "Just tell me what you want so you can get out of my life."

Jack blinks and frowns back. "Uh, have you been paying attention, Rhysie? You didn't get the proper clearances like everyone else does to come up here. And that makes me a very pissed off boss! You work for me, you play by my rules, cupcake!"

"Oh please." Rhys crosses his arms. "Everyone knows your standards are impossible."

"Impossible? That may be what it looks like to you, but I just have a higher standard than what you chumps are capable of processing!" Jack steps forward, his voice tipped with poison. "You're making up stuff on how you want to research humans or whatever, figure out what makes them tick so we can find make our deals more appealing. But I know what you're really doing, you just want to laze around, snacking pretzels and watching whatever comes on TV and then tell me that it's research. You think I'm stupid or something!?"

You blink as you listen to Jack vent and look to Rhys, who has crossed his arms as he continues glaring at Jack.

Rhys, don't do it.

"Yes."

Oh my God, you're both going to die.

A harsh silence falls over the room as you expect the worst. A chuckle escapes Jack as a hand reaches up to his shades, quickly taking them off.
His gaze is cold, matching the icy blue of his right eye. But his left eye is all white, with no pupil or iris to focus on. You take a step back as Jack approaches Rhys, doing nothing to hide his want for a violent end. Even as Rhys stands his ground, you hear a faint gulp.

"It's so cute how you think you're going to win this whole thing. Time for a little reality check."

Well, considered your house destroyed. Isn't there any way you could avoid killing each other?

"Yeah, Rhysie! You have a good reason for why I shouldn't kill you and your little pet?"

Pet? Really? Feeling your cheeks rapidly heat up, your hand curls into a fist and you shoot it straight toward the devil's face.

Jack catches it with ease, not bothering to look at the attacker as he grips onto your fist. Despite your attempts to back away, his grip is strong, not to mention burning hot. You grit your teeth, your body desperately wanting to cry out in pain. A chuckle breaks your concentration as Jack slowly turns to you, his pure white eye burning into you.

"Jack, what the hell do you think you're-"

"You stole this soul from me." His hand moves to your wrist, wrapping his fingers tightly around it as a scorching pain invades it. A yelp of pain escapes from you as you close your eyes, trying to think of something else other than the burn. "I'm just taking back what's mine."

"Don't you-"

But Rhys's protest ends abruptly as you feel something on your lips. You can feel Jack's other hand behind your head, grabbing your hair tightly to limit your movement. There was nothing you could do but stand there and take his kiss, a taste of soot and iron lingering as he finally backs away.

"Come on, kitten. Open your eyes and-"

You don't need to be told twice to open your eyes, but you barely register the next few moments. You see Rhys dashing toward Jack, his right hand on the back of his neck. Jack yells in pain before being pushed to the ground, Rhys pinning him down for a few seconds as sparks seem to flash in and out on his hand. At least you think that's his hand. It's not one of his gloves, but it's more of a deep purple color with claws threatening to dig into his boss's skin. As soon as Jack stops moving, only faintly breathing, Rhys releases him and quickly turns to you, panic and alarm spreading across his face.

"You alright? How's your wrist?" Without waiting for a response, he gently grasps your wrist and examines it. You look down as well, noticing a nice burn from where Jack grabbed you. It may be a light pink right now, but it's most likely going to turn more red in time. At least there isn't blisters, your skin looks fairly cleans otherwise. But your attention is split between your burn and Rhys's...hand? Claw? You can't decide what to call it.

"That will go away in a bit, but," he grits his teeth and swears to himself, "I'm such a coward, why didn't I step in? Now he's...and you..." He can't seem to figure out what he wants to say before suddenly glaring up at you, his gold eye sending shock waves through you.

"Why did you do that!?!" His outburst alarms you as you stammer, asking what he's talking about. "Why did you try to attack him? You know what he can do, so why!?!"

A lump forms in your throat as you try to develop an answer. Why did you try to punch Jack? It was definitely him calling you a pet that set you off, but it feels like something more than that. If you're going to be honest, you're angry at both of them. Rhys just wanted to come up here, and you
were his ticket out. You feel so used. Used by the both of them. You're getting caught up in their drama that you didn't sign up for. You just wanted to live again. This wasn't part of the deal.

But with hands and voice shaking, all you can muster is a small statement along with something wet falling down your cheek.

Even with all the shit you went through, you could at least give him another chance to live.

Rhys's eyes widen, his expression softening as he raises his left hand to cup your cheek, wiping away the tear. "Hey, hey, hey, don't cry. I didn't mean to-" He stops himself, sighs, and looks to Jack, mumbling something as he lays still. "Look, you don't have to make stuff up. I know you probably want to strangle me for making stuff up about everything, but that isn't important right now." Rhys takes his claw away, grabbing his glove in his back pocket and carefully putting it back on. "Just get yourself bandaged up and get some rest. You've had a long day."

What about Jack?

"He's...gonna be out for a few hours. But since he made a deal with you, I can't really get rid of him. Sorry."

Wait, you have a deal with Jack now? Can that happen?

Rhys merely shrugs. "It's complicated. I'll explain everything later."

You stare him down until he sighs again and makes an 'x' over his heart.

"Cross my heart and hope to die."

Fine. You're not satisfied with this promise but you're not willing to argue further. You turn to the bathroom to patch yourself up, overhearing Jack mumbling in his sleep.

What the hell is a 'butt stallion'?

Chapter End Notes

-shrugs into infinity-
You don't know how, but as soon as you hit the bed, you fell asleep.

Surprising, considering your roommate just used you as a way to get off work behind his boss's back. And now that boss just claimed your soul, even though it's already taken. Just the thought of being owned gives you mixed feelings. On the one hand, you're glad Rhys kept you alive. On the other hand, he's probably just being selfish again. If you're dead, he has no point in being up here anymore. With Jack stepping into the picture (or rather, crashing through the wall with a bulldozer and playing dubstep over speakers), things have gotten needlessly complicated.

You just wanted some watermelon, dammit.

But whatever. You're happy just to have a few peaceful minutes to yourself.

~

Waking up with a snake peeking under your covers was enough to get you wide awake again.

As you slowly blink your eyes, clearing your vision, the reptile stares straight at you. You immediately realize this isn't Rhys. This visitor is yellow with black scales and spots along the top of its back. Your eyes widen, not sure how to respond to this.

Don't scream. You'll blow my cover.

Wait a minute, you recognize that voice. You quickly sit up and grasp the snake in your hands, glaring at Jack as you stare him down. What the hell is he doing here? And why was he in your bed??

Rhysie was asleep on the couch when I came to, so I took this opportunity to find a good place to hide. Your bed looked nice and he wouldn't want to disturb you, so I made myself at home.

You grit your teeth and harshly poke the top of his head. That's not an excuse for why he chose under your covers for his hiding spot.

It's warm! I like warm places!

That's it, he's getting thrown out the window.

Wow, rude. It's not like I copped a feel or anything. He pauses. Unless you want me to.

You point out you could easily crush Jack's skull when he's like this.

Okay, point taken! Now put me down, it's weird to be carried like this!

You hold back a laugh at that statement and gently put the snake down. After doing so, you hear a sigh as the snake settles on the sheets in front of you.
Thanks. Good to know you understand simple commands.

Don't start.

Fine.

Now get out.

That's also fine. Jack turns around to leave before quietly adding something. I guess you don't want me to tell you about the current situation between you, me, and Rhysie, then.

In the spur of the moment, you tell Jack to stop. You should have known he was just baiting you so he could stay in your room longer, but your curiosity is too strong to just let him go right now.

You could practically sense the victorious grin as the snake turns to face you once again. Oh, so now you want me in here? How about you make up your mind so I'm not turning around constantly.

It's not like you want Jack in here, but you really want to know what the hell is going on. Like where is your soul going?

Well, it's not going anywhere right now. You're not dead.

You know that, but what happens when you die?

Hold on. He chuckles, amused. Have you already everything that's happened in the past hour? I basically own you now! I'm the boss, I'm gonna override anything Rhys tries to do! If I had my way, I would be crushing every bone in his body with my bare hands!

You do your best not to shudder at that image and get to your next question. Why doesn't Jack just take care of all this right now if he's so powerful?

He sighs. There's the trick. Even though I have all the cool demon powers, I'm not the boss of this plane. If we were in hell, things would be different. But we're not, we're here on Earth where humans run around like mice on caffeine and talk about which actor is the hottest even though they all look the same. Which, by the way, are all named Chris for some reason? What's up with that? Get some variety, for Pete's sake! There are other names besides Chris!

You urge Jack to get back to the point.

Hold your horses, I'm getting there. My point is, as much as I hate to say it, Rhys and I are on the same level here. That's why he was able to, he spits out his next words, knock me out. Ugh, so glad no one was around to see that. I've got a reputation to uphold!

You move on to your next concern. If Jack owns your soul now, where does that put Rhys?

Like I said, while we're both on Earth, Rhys and I are on the same level. Because of that, while I can make a deal with you-

Which was forced upon you.

Let me finish, cupcake. I made a deal, but I can't overwrite Rhys's mark on you. Not here, at least.
Alright, you think you're starting to get it.

Look at that, you're not as dumb as I thought you were, Miss 'I'm gonna punch a demon in the face because he said a thing I didn't like'.

You are seriously tempted to do it again just for him making that burn on your wrist.

Is that what you're hung up about? At least I didn't give you blisters! Or seared your skin to the point where your bone would be exposed! Wait, with my grip, your veins would burn off, too. Ooh, imagine all the blood, it would just cover the floor-

You call for Rhys.

Come on, I was joking! Can no one take a joke around here?? It's like everything offends you humans these days!

As footsteps approach the bedroom, you ask Jack one more question.

What's a butt stallion?

Just my pony back home. Made of diamonds. No big deal.

Why does that exist?

Um, because it's cool? Do I need to give you a reason? I should show her to you sometime, make you so jealous. I bet you've never even seen a diamond bigger than your pinkie finger, it would blow your mind.

As Jack smugly goes on, the door slowly opens as Rhys steps in, a bit slumped over. He wipes a tired eye with a gloved hand as he holds back a yawn and speaks. "Hey, you alright?" Putting his hand down and looking over the scene, his eyes shoot open as he sees the patterned snake and immediately glares at him. "You."

Yeah, it's me. You don't need to know much about Jack to know he would be rolling his eyes if he could.

Before you can get a chance to explain what's going on, Rhys is already at your bedside, quickly picking up the intruder and staring straight into him. "Why are you here?"

And why do you guys keep picking me up?? You know, this is why I don't like this form, it's because you bastards keep doing this kind of shit!

You take this chance to explain that Jack was looking for a place to hide. By the way, why did Rhys choose that time to take a nap while his boss who wants to kill him could wake up and slit his throat while he slept?

See, I like this girl because she cuts the bullshit. She knows you're a lazy piece of crap.

"You know I don't really get a chance to use my arm. I was tired."

Tired from putting one billion volts of electricity through my body? You really are losing your touch, Rhysie! Literally!

Rhys groans before turning his gaze to you. "Is he bothering you? I can lock him in the closet if he
is."

Jack turns to look at you as well. *I'm not bothering her, we were just having a talk about how complicated everything is now because someone couldn't follow my-
"You know I could choke you right now with just my normal hand."

**Everyone's throwing threats left and right today! What's up with that?** There's a slight pause. I mean, I love that you guys are actually showing some guts and not cowering in the corner and peeing your pants, that's a nice change of pace. It'll make killing you so satisfying.

"Yep, into the closet you go."

You tell Rhys to wait as he turns around, though he gives you a confused look in return. You're just curious as to why they're not trying to kill each other right now and just get it over with. While you're glad they're not wrecking the house, that's what you're still unsure about.

Your roommate and the snake look at you, to each other, and back to you before they both answer simultaneously.

"Too much paperwork."

Oh. Okay then.

**Hey, you try to kill someone and make an excuse to how they died. Make sure it's not suspicious at all.** Jack answers before being forcibly taken from the room, the door shut behind the two as you hear muffled arguing move down the hallway.

Lacking anything else to do besides digest new information, you lay back on the bed and stare at the ceiling.

~

Time loses all meaning when you think. It's one of the weird realities of life. You think you've been laying on the bed for hours, but when you look at the clock, it's only been five minutes. How is it already seven o'clock? You would be concerned that Rhys hasn't started nagging at you about it, but he's probably too busy making sure Jack doesn't destroy something.

Jack...What a piece of shit. You raise your burned wrist up to your face, grabbing at the bandages and slowly unwrapping them. Seeing your wound already beginning to fade makes you sigh in relief. You don't know if you would like having a scar. Though you guess you wouldn't have control of where you got it and how. Even if you didn't want one, you might get one anyway. That seems to be the summary of your life right now, getting things even if you didn't want them.

Your stomach rumbles, interrupting your thoughts. Guess it has been a while since you've eaten something. After discarding the bandages in the nearby trash bin, you make your way out of the bedroom and down the hall. As you step into the kitchen and open the fridge, you can't help but smile as you see a bit of watermelon left in a bowl. Looks like Rhys made sure to save some for you. You make a mental note to thank him and grab it before closing the fridge door.

"Sorry about the mess."

You nearly jump and quickly turn to the voice, calming down as you see it's only Rhys, slumped over the table and flipping a pen in his hand. As you take a seat for yourself at the table, you say the fridge looks fine.
"No, I mean with," he looks to the side before looking back to his pen, "well, everything."

Oh. You awkwardly put a piece of your watermelon in your mouth, not paying much attention to the taste. After looking around again, you ask where Jack is.

"He went out."

To do what?

"I don't know. Probably to slaughter innocent women and children."

Come on, be serious.

"I am! I'm off the hook for now, but when we go back, he's going to publicly execute me!"

What happens to demons when they die?

"I don't know, and I don't intend to find out what happens if they can!"

Fair enough. You quickly change the subject, seeing as how high-strung Rhys is getting, and thank him for the watermelon.

"Oh." He absentmindedly answers as the pen flies from his hand onto the table. "Yeah, it's no problem. Does it taste alright?"

Yeah, it tastes great.

"Good. How's your wrist?"

It's alright, the burn is starting to fade already.

"Good. I mean, not good because," he stops himself and picks up the pen to fiddle with it again, "you know."

Yeah, you know.

As Rhys begins to flip the pen in his hand again, you have another piece of fruit and stare at it, thinking back to when he took his glove off. You've never seen him do that before, but he has a good reason to hide it. A deep purple claw is not a natural thing for a human body to have. But you didn't really get a good look at it with all the chaos going on at the time.

The pen drops again, clacking onto the table and breaking the awkward silence between the two of you. As he reaches over to pick up the pen again, you ask if his hand has always been like that.

He stops and frowns at you, making you instantly regret asking that. "Like what?"

Never mind, you quickly tell him, and stuff another piece of watermelon in your mouth.

Even as you tell Rhys not to worry about it, it's probably none of your business anyway, he keeps giving you a sour look before sitting up again. "At least now you won't nag me about wearing something with short sleeves anymore."

You choose not to say anything as he gets up and heads out of the kitchen. You suddenly lose your appetite, your chest and throat feeling tight as you get up and put away the leftovers. What the hell, you were just asking a question. Why was Rhys so defensive about it? You saw it already, it's not like he should hide it anymore. Though to be fair, if you had something like that, you probably
wouldn't be so willing to share it with everyone either.

Your phone vibrates in your pocket and you push aside your thoughts as you grab and check it. Someone is calling you, but you don't recognize the number. Throwing caution to the wind, you accept the call.

"Cool, I did get the right number!"

You gently slam your forehead on the fridge. How did Jack get your number?

"Stole it off of Rhys while he was sleeping. He doesn't keep a password on his phone, can you believe that? Does he not think anyone would steal it or something? But whatever, I know how plain he is, it's not like he would have anything juicy on there."

Does he always have to ramble on about things you don't really care about? Again, you urge Jack to tell you what's going on.

"Oh yeah, do you drink at all?"

Like alcohol?

"What else would I be talking about, dumdum?"

You think for a moment before answering. While you do like having a beer occasionally, you don't make a habit on it.

There's a groan on the other end. "I'm dealing with a bunch of-" He cuts himself short as he clears his throat. "Okay, that would explain the lack of liquor in the house."

Wait, is that why he's out right now? To find alcohol?

"Listen, if there's one thing you people know how to do right, it's getting completely smashed. Now do you want me to get you something or not?"

God, he's such a pig.

"I'll let you say that since I'm not over there to strangle you for doing so. Answer the damn question, princess."

Fuck it. Considering what you're going through right now, you could use a drink.

"Good answer. I'll be home in a bit."

You don't bother saying goodbye before hanging up. Jack is probably going to criticize you for that, but you don't care at the moment.

"I didn't know you drink."

As Rhys comments from the living room, you stop moping by the fridge and turn out of the kitchen, standing at the edge between there and where Rhys was. He is currently laying on the couch, looking at you upside down as he rests his head on one of the arms. You answer that you don't really feel the need to drink.

"I guess that's a good thing. Being an alcoholic can be expensive. But I'm sure a cheapskate like you knows that."
You can't help but giggle at his comment, which makes him smirk in response. Even if there's still a hint of depression in his eyes, at least he's starting to lighten up a bit.

Does he drink?

"Sometimes, but I don't really like beer. I'm more of a wine person."

Ooh, look at him be sophisticated.

"Come on, that doesn't make me better than anyone else."

He seemed to be better than Jack when he knocked him out.

A slight pink rises in his cheeks as he raises his hand and waves it dismissively. "That was a lucky shot! Besides, I was just angry and I didn't control myself and before I knew it, Jack was on the floor."

Come on, he had to think that was pretty cool.

His eyes widen, stammering for a second before responding. "You think so?"

Except for the part where he had to take a nap and let Jack enter your bedroom. Otherwise, yes.

Rhys covers his face with his hands, making an exasperated groan. "Oh my god, stop talking about that!"

A laugh escapes as you watch his reaction, reminding you of someone with their pants pulled down. It was nice to have the mood lighten for once.

Your amusement lingers even as the front door opens, Jack stepping into the house triumphantly as he holds up a pack of beer. "Who wants some booze, kiddos?!

"Could this get any worse..." Rhys mumbles as he sits up and uncovers his face, still deeply pink.

An impressed whistle shoots out of Jack's lips as he looks at Rhys. "What's with you? Got caught with some naughty-"

"Don't even finish that."

"Come on, there's nothing wrong with a little of that!" Jack makes a circle with his forefinger and thumb on one hand and brings up his other hand, pushing a finger in and out of the circle.

You laugh because let's face it, sex jokes are funny no matter what.

Rhys turns to you and frowns, yelling out, "Don't encourage him!"

"We're just having some fun, Rhysie!"

"And can you not call me that? It's Rhys. Just Rhys."

"Alright, whatever you say, cupcake."

Rhys throws up his arms, exasperated as you ask for a drink.

"That's what I'm here for, girlie!" Jack cheerfully announces as he hands you a can of beer.

"If you make her an alcoholic, I'll smash your skull with a hammer."
"Not before I gut you like a fish."

Not before you assassinate the both of them and take over hell yourself.

"Dream on, kiddo."

Oh well, you think as you take a sip of beer. At least nobody's killing each other. The only threat here is the chance of a hangover.

Honestly, why can't that be the only threat looming over your head?

Chapter End Notes

Yeah, sorry for the infodump.
And for anyone who's wondering about what Jack is supposed to be, he's a desert king snake.
The Part Where You Get A Gun

The slight buzz in your head as you wake up indicates your worst fears. You have a slight hangover.

How did this even happen? You didn't even drink that much! Ugh, this is what you get for being a lightweight. But you work today, so it's not like you can stay in bed all day. With a light groan, you sit up and open the window curtain an inch, letting morning sunlight fill the room.

But another groan signals that someone else is in the room with you, but you think you have a good idea of who the culprit is. Lifting your blanket up, you find the desert king snake curled up underneath it, who gives you a side look as soon as you discover him.

Stop moving too much, I'm trying to sleep.

Your brows furrow as you ask Jack why he's here when you gave him the couch.

You think I'm going to settle for a couch? No way, this is way more comfy. Besides, you gave Rhysie the spare bed and I'm not sleeping with a guy who snores.

An amused snort escapes you before Jack speaks again.

Princess, if I have to tell you to get your head out of the gutter, there's something wrong.

You apologize, only partly serious.

Why do you have a spare bed, anyway? It's not like you were living with someone else before Rhysie came along.

You shrug, it just came with the house when you got it.

Uh-huh. The snake nods as he listens, but looks away again as he curls up tighter. Just get up or don't. Either way, don't wake me up unless it's past noon.

Fine, it's not like you care about his sleeping habits. But he needs to learn that you like having personal space. Looking at the clock on the side table, you see that it's nine o'clock, about an hour before your shift with Marcus is supposed to start. Better start your routine. You have to force your body to get out of bed and grab some clothes, but you should be able to shut up the buzz with some ibuprofen once you're finished with your shower.

Except there's someone already in the bathroom. The door is shut and the light inside is on, which you can see from the bottom crack of the door. Also, the sound of rushing water inside indicates that someone was taking a shower before you. It has to be Rhys in there, who else would it be? Looks like he gave up on his sink bath plan for now. Oh well, you can have some breakfast while you wait for him. It's not like you're in a big hurry.

Okay, this is a little ridiculous. You thought guys were quick with taking showers, but the water's been off for ten minutes now and Rhys still hasn't come out of the bathroom. What the hell could he be doing in there? You cross your arms and frown at the door as you stand across the hall from
it, as if intimidating it to open up for you.

"What's up, buttercup?"

You turn to see Jack, but quickly turn away when you see what he's wearing. Or rather, what he's not wearing. Wearing only a pair of yellow boxer shorts, his body type was no longer a secret to you. It's not as if Jack was totally buff, but his chest still looked fairly toned, along with biceps that seemed like they could have carried some substantial weight once upon a time. Not to mention the strong shoulders and wow, stop thinking about how he looks, damn.

Needless to say, you suddenly felt intimidated to be standing next to a man like him. But with a massive yawn, Jack manages to bring your attention back to him, though you do your best to only look at his eyes.

"You waiting for Rhysie, huh?"

You nod, pointing out that he's been in there for a while now.

"Oh yeah, I always did peg him for a bathroom hog. Probably in there doing his hair or something."

But why is Jack up? You thought he said he doesn't get up until noon.

"Everyone's gotta pee."

Okay, didn't need to know that.

"What, you want me to say I'm gonna jack off in there instead?"

Nope, stop talking please.

Jack follows your instruction for a solid five seconds before he clicks his tongue. "Alright, time's up!" He suddenly yells out, causing you to jump before he grabs the doorknob to the bathroom and opens it, swiftly stepping inside.

"Hey, what are you-"

But before Rhys can finish his question, he's already thrown out of the room, landing face first as the door slams shut behind him. Luckily, he's wearing pants, meaning you don't have to shield your eyes.

But that doesn't stop you from looking at his right arm. Since he's wearing a loose tank top, Rhys doesn't have a good chance of shielding it from you. Out in the open, the deep purple of his arm clashes with his pale skin, but it seems armored, with plating covering most of his forearm and bicep. It almost seems to shimmer, reminding you of a knight's set of armor. Offsetting the rest of the arm is a symbol on the side of his shoulder, a white spiral with what looks like an amethyst in the center of it.

Needless to say it takes most of your self restraint to look away as Rhys sits himself up, grumbling under his breath as he glares at the door. After he gets up and smooths out his top, he only just notices you, his eyes widening like he got caught committing a crime.

"Oh, uh...hey!" Rhys clutches his right arm with his left, as if he thinks that's enough to hide it from you. His eyes flutter side to side before flashing an awkward smile at you. "How's it going? You sleep alright?"
Yes, you slept fine. Aside from the fact you found a snake in your bed.

Rhys frowns and sighs, his normal self beginning to shine through. "Yeah, I didn't think Jack would stay on the couch for long. But it was worth a shot. Don't know why I took it, but I can say I tried."

You're more surprised that he took so long to get out of the bathroom.

"Oh, that? How do you think I get to look so good every day, huh?" A smirk peeks through and you swear you could see a glimmer of gold in his left eye.

Next time, he should be more considerate that you may want to get ready for work.

Rhys blinks, as if just remembering that you had a source of income, and looks to the side again. "Alright, sorry. Won't happen again."

It probably will, but at least he apologized for it.

The bathroom door swings open again as Jack steps out, yawning and swiping a lock of hair from his face. He only takes a quick glance at Rhys, who returns with a glare, and steps in between the two of you, heading back to your bedroom.

You yell at Jack to stay out of your room, but it falls on deaf ears as the door closes. Though looking at your phone, you don't have time to argue right now. Before heading into the bathroom, you turn to Rhys and ask if he's used up the hot water.

He blinks again, and answers quietly as his hands move together, fidgeting slightly. "Don't be mad."

You hide your groan and tell him not to worry about it before shutting the door on him.

~

"You got that?"

You blink and snap back to reality, looking up at Marcus as he intensely stares at you. Though you're ashamed to admit it, you've been having a problem with spacing out lately. Probably because a lot has happened in the past couple of days, including a new 'friend' moving in. But to make your boss happy, you nod and say you understand.

The larger man blinks and crosses his arms, shaking his head. "Why must you lie to me? I could practically see you having your head in the clouds!"

With your lie utterly destroyed, you shrink back, crossing your arms as your cheeks heat up.

Marcus sighs and backs away. "It's very simple. Just be on your best behavior while the representative of Hyperion is visiting. If they like us, they give us guns. And more guns means more money! Do you understand?"

You nod, and that seems to give Marcus some peace as he steps away from the counter and towards his office.

"You call me if there's any trouble before he comes."

Yes, sir. The door to his office closes, and you're alone with the racks of guns again.
You might as well do some dusting before this representative guy gets here. Grabbing a spare rag, you make your rounds around the store, wiping off any prints and smudges you see on the glass cases. It's not the most exciting job in the world, but it's something to do in between customers. Still, if you had to be honest, you would rather be doing anything but dusting right now.

So when you heard the door open behind you, you put on your best friendly smile and turn around to greet your customer.

"Slow your roll, pal, I'm not-"

The two of you stop and look at each other in disbelief. It's none other than Jack, causing your smile to fade from your lips. He's actually dressed this time, but his sunglasses are missing, leaving his mismatched eyes and scar for the world to see. But he doesn't seem to care about that, he's too busy laughing at you.

"Holy crap, are you kidding me? This is where you work!? Oh, that!" He points at you with an amused grin. "That is frickin' hilarious!"

You only frown and ask what he's doing here.

"Hold on, does Rhysie know a pipsqueak like you sells guns? Can you even lift them??"

He knows, and you're perfectly capable of carrying guns.

"No way, I bet your friggin' arms would break from carrying a sniper rifle!"

You roll your eyes and turn around to continue wiping the counter, letting Jack laugh on behind you.

"What is going on in here?"

Looks like you've been saved by Marcus. But as you turn to explain the situation to your boss, you notice the large grin on his face as he approaches Jack, riding out his last giggle, with open arms. "Well, if it isn't Mr. Hyperion himself!"

You blink. What.

Jack wipes an eye, his smile finally fading away. "Yeah, yeah, that's me."

"What a pleasant surprise! If I had known the big boss would be coming, I would have-"

"Renovate the place top to bottom? Yeah, I don't blame you." Before anyone can catch his fast insult, Jack has already moved on. "Hey, how about we move this somewhere else? Make our little trade, huh?"

"Oh, of course! Let's step into my office and we will discuss business, huh?"

"Lead the way, pal."

As Marcus leads the way to his office, 'Mr. Hyperion' gives you a smug look, winks, and follows after your boss, striding tall with his arms crossed.

As soon as the door is closed and you're sure the two men are busy, you quickly text Rhys.

[[Hey, does Jack work for Hyperion? He's talking to my boss and I'm a little confused?? Is he Mr. Hyperion??]]
After sending your message, you try to distract yourself by looking through a catalog discarded on a side table as you wait for Rhys's reply. Come on, Jack can't be a big part of Hyperion. There is no way he can be responsible enough to run a company!

Your phone dings and with lightning speed, you check your messages.

{{Yeah, Jack is the CEO of that place on the side. When he's not damning souls in hell I mean. Why do you ask?}}

WHAT.

Okay, so let's see if you got this straight.

The fucking devil also runs a gun company.

The same gun company that was responsible for manufacturing the gun that killed you and got you into this whole mess with your soul being in the middle of a giant loophole.

You have no idea whether to laugh or cry.

But your phone dings again before you can make that decision and check your new message.

{{He's over where you work, isn't he?}}

You quickly type out your answer.

[[Yep]]

A full minute passes before Rhys texts you back.

{{You want some coffee after your shift is done?}}

You don't have to think about it to know what you want right now.

[[Yep]]

{{I'll meet you after work, then. Usual place?}}

[[Yep]]

{{And please say something other than yep}}

[[Ok]]

{{You're hopeless}}

After your conversation wraps up, the door to your boss's office opens again and Jack emerges, causing you to quickly put your phone away.

"Well, Mr. Kincaid, I'm sure you're busy doing whatever it is you're doing in this place, so I'll leave you to it. Oh, and thank you for choosing Hyperion!"

He shuts the door behind him, which is when you notice a small case he is now carrying by his side. As soon as the CEO spots you, his eyes brighten as he walks towards you, smirking as he places the case in front of you on the counter.

"Got ya a present, kiddo!"
You can only stare at the case, completely black and leather bound. Gesturing to it, you ask Jack what this is.

His smile grows, as if he was waiting for you to ask that. "So here's the story. Me and the boss are talking, right? And he tells me that besides the basics of gun maintenance, you don't know shit about handling one. So I thought, since I'm so damn generous and there were plenty of these lying around the place, you should learn how to use one! Don't worry, he knows you're getting this, you're not gonna get in trouble. Well, maybe if you shoot your eye out, which might definitely happen."

Wait, you're confused. Why is it so important that you know how to use a gun? You've never encountered a situation where you needed to hurt someone!

Jack raises an eyebrow. "You sure about that?"

An awkward pause spreads between the two of you before you clarify. Why does Jack want you to know how to use a gun?

He places a hand on the counter and leans on it as he looks down at you, his voice taking on a low, sinister tone. "Because if I had to choose how you die, it's not going to be in some dirty alleyway surrounded by rats and heroin addicted hobos. I'm giving you a chance to defend yourself, and let me tell ya, you're getting real close to screwing that up."

You have to stare back. You're not going to look away and give him the chance to call you a coward. Damn it, you're fighting him back every chance you get.

The devil seems to notice your determination and grins. "That's what I like to see. It's no fun if they're too scared to look at you. At least you maintain eye contact like a proper lady, right?" Softly, he nudges the case closer to you. "Now are you taking the damn gun or not?"

You're not going to lie, you're still confused as to why Jack wants to give you a weapon. If you're going to be honest, you pegged him as the kind of guy that would want an easy win. But you'll take every advantage you can get. You reach over and firmly grasp the handle of the case, bringing it towards you.

Jack, seemingly pleased that you accepted his gift, throws away any intimidation technique he had and steps back. "Awesome! Knew you would see things my way! You want any lessons, you know where to find me, pumpkin!" With that, he turns on his heel and waves as he heads to the exit, striding out with his usual confident stride.

As soon as he's left, you check the time. Looks like it's quitting time. After looking over the case one more time, making sure it wasn't bugged or something, you get up and peek into Marcus's office. Knocking on the door lightly, you distract him from his magazine to tell him you're clocking out.

"Oh, okay. Good work today."

He doesn't seem interested in you, but you're not going to complain. But still, you're curious about his opinion on something and call his attention again.

Marcus looks up from his articles again, his expression clearly showing how disinterested he's in. "Yes?"

Would he have any idea of how Jack got that scar on his face?
The larger man frowns. "What scar?"

What scar? The one that's shaped like an upside down 'v' and taking up most of his face!

Marcus only continues to frown at you before looking back to his magazine. "Go to bed early tonight. You are going crazy again."

Wait, you're going crazy?? How can anyone not see his scar? Ugh, whatever, you don't have enough patience for this. Besides, Rhys is waiting at the cafe for coffee and you're not going to keep him waiting.

After clocking out, you grudgingly grab the case and head out of the shop. You pray to God this is all a big joke and the weapon inside is just a water gun.

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